HINTS

RESPECTING

THE CULTURE

AND

THE USE

OF

POTATOES.

THE BOARD of AGRICULTURE think it incumbent upon them, to take the earlieſt opportunity, of ſubmitting the following Hints to the public; they come recommended by the experience of many, who have cultivated Potatoes largely.

1. *Sorts.*——Two circumſtances require attention: 1, That the ſorts ſhould not be liable to the *curl;* and 2, that they ſhould be mealy. The kind known under the name of the Champion has thoſe qualities, and is alſo very early and productive. The Ox Noble is hardy, keeps well, and in the ſpring boils mealy. The Kidney is of an excellent quality, and though the crop is leſs productive, and in ſome ſoils liable to curl, the price at market is proportionably

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greater. The Surinam, Cluſter, or Yam, ſo well calculated for ſtock, never curls, and is extremely productive. Thoſe who cultivate Potatoes on a great ſcale, ought to have different ſorts,—for early uſe,—for keeping,—and for ſtock.

2. *Modes of Planting.*——1, Drilling on land already in tillage. 2, Dibbling upon graſs or lays. 3, Lazy beds on bogs, wet peat moors, and lands too rough to plough.

Drilling.——Soils liable to be wet during the winter ſhould be ploughed in autumn, ſo as to lie dry. In the ſpring, plough and harrow flat. In April and May, the ſets may be planted. Draw furrows three feet aſunder, in thoſe furrows lay the dung, not leſs than 20 loads or tons per acre. Drop the ſets on the manure nine inches aſunder. If the land be at all ſtiff, cover the dung and ſets by drawing earth over them with hand-hoes; adding more afterwards with the plough; if it be light and friable, they may be covered with the plough. Keep the intervals clean by ploughing or horſe-hoeing, for ſix or eight weeks after the Potatoes appear; afterwards by hand-hoeing: hand-hoe the rows when young, and afterwards weed them. Take up the crop by opening the rows with a plough, and harrow and pick more than once.

Land prepared and dunged, for wheat that could not be ſown, or where the plant has been deſtroyed by the froſt, are ready without further manuring to receive Potatoes in this mode of culture.

Dibbling.——If the ſoil of the graſs be very rich, it will want no manure; if moderately good, only 10 or 12 tons per acre. If no manure be ſpread, plough late in autumn, and ſcuffle or ſhim the ſurface ſhallow; or for want of thoſe tools, if weeds or graſs ariſe, hand-hoe it in March. If manure be uſed, ſpread it on the lay in ſpring, and plough it in; in either caſe, dibble in the ſets ſtraight on the centre of every other furrow, nine inches from plant to plant. Keep clean by hand-hoeing; but a narrow ſhim may be paſſed twice along the intervals. Weed the rows if neceſſary. When the crop is taken up, plough *acroſs* the former furrows.

This method is applicable alſo to dry moors and waſtes capable of being ploughed; and by paring and burning the ſurface, during the drying north eaſt winds of March, dung may be ſaved. To add lime, in ſuch caſes, to the aſhes, is beneficial.

After an early crop of graſs for hay, or after the firſt crop of clover, the land may be ploughed and Potatoes dibbled in, if proper ſets have been preſerved for that purpoſe; and in the more ſouthern parts of the iſland a good crop may be obtained.

Lazy Beds——Upon bogs partially, or wholly drained, and upon ſuch rough ſoils as are difficult to plough, this method may be adopted. Pare and burn the ſurface; add lime to the aſhes. Strike the land into ſtraight beds ſix feet wide; with intervals of two feet, or two

and a half. Lay the ſets twelve inches ſquare on the beds, and cover them two or three inches deep with ſpades, from the intervals; when the plants appear, cover them again in the ſame manner, one and a half or two inches more. Keep them clean by onehand-hoeing, and ſucceſſive weeding. They may be taken up with the plough by ſplitting the beds, and filling the former intervals; converting the open furrows left in the centre of the former beds into drains, deep enough to leave the land dry in winter.

3. *Produce.*——In any of theſe methods the farmer may expect from 2 to 300 buſhels an acre, 75lb. per buſhel. Some ſoils will yield more, and ſome may afford leſs. The ſelling price throughout the kingdom may be reckoned from 1*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* the buſhel; at 1*s.* 3*d.* 300 buſhels yield £18. 15*s.* the acre; even at 1*s.* it is £15.; the expences will vary with circumſtances, but they can ſcarcely be reckoned more than £10. and conſequently leave from £5. to £8. 15*s.* profit per acre, counting on an average. In ſome places the charges will run higher; in others perhaps ſomething leſs. The drill method is by much the cheapeſt. If the whole ſhould not be ſaleable, the reſt may be given to fatting oxen, to horſes, and to any other live-ſtock, with advantage, particularly if when boiled or ſteamed, a handful of ſalt be added to two buſhels of Potatoes.

4. *Double Crops.*——In Cornwall, in Cheſhire, in Lancaſhire, and in the neighbourhood of

London, two crops have been obtained from the ſame ground in one year, the mode of raiſing which will be found in the Agricultural Reports from the counties of Cheſhire and Lancaſhire *. Thoſe who raiſe early Potatoes, may certainly have a ſecond crop on the ſame ground.

5. *The following Crop.*——Wheat has been ſown with ſucceſs after Potatoes; but barley or oats are more to be recommended. On dry moory ſoils treated as above, turnips may follow, fed off by ſheep, and theſe by ſpring corn and graſſes.

6. *Preſervation.*——The moſt approved method, is that of digging in a very dry ſpot, trenches, ſix feet wide and eighteen inches deep; ſpread ſtraw; pile the Potatoes into the ſhape of the roof of a houſe; cover tight and cloſe with ſtraw ſix inches thick; and then with earth fifteen to eighteen inches more; flatted regularly and firmly, and ſharp at top, raiſed from three to five feet above ground. If there ſhall be any apprehenſion of moiſture, dig a trench at a few yards off,

* The method purſued in Cheſhire for raiſing early Potatoes, is to keep the ſets of the earlieſt kinds in a warm place, where they may ſprout at leaſt three inches by the beginning of March, being covered with ſtraw or ruſhes every night in froſts. They are carefully planted with the ſprouts on, in drills, on a light ſoil: the end of the ſprout juſt under the ſurface of the ground. Yield a crop the middle of May.—Cheſhire Report, p. 18.—See alſo Lancaſhire Report, p. 32; where a very full account is given of the proceſs.

deeper than that in which the roots are laid. The drier they are when thus packed up, the ſafer they will be.

7. *General Hints.*——There are a great number of borders round the corn fields of every farm, which may be broken up to great advantage, as Potatoes always thrive beſt upon newly broken up ground; and if the ſoil ſhall be tolerably good, the turf being inverted at about eight or ten inches depth, will be nearly as efficacious as dung.

Upon large farms, labourers might be allowed to plant for themſelves, in ſuch angles and corners as might otherwiſe be neglected, which would be a beneficial indulgence to them, and no material loſs to the poſſeſſor. In waſtes in general alſo, Potatoes might be raiſed with little manure, to great advantage.

8. *Potatoe Bread.*——To thoſe who prefer making Potatoes into Bread, to the common modes of uſing them, the following receipt is recommended.

" Chooſe the moſt mealy ſort of Potatoe, " boil and ſkin them. Take 12lbs. break and " ſtrain well through a very coarſe ſieve of " hair, or a very fine one of wire, in ſuch a " manner as to reduce the roots, as nearly as " poſſible, to a ſtate of flour. Mix it well " with 20lbs. of wheaten flour. Of this mix- " ture make and ſet the dough exactly in the " ſame manner as if the whole were wheaten " flour. This quantity will make nine loaves " of about 5lbs. each in the dough, and when

" baked about two hours, will produce 42lbs.
" of excellent bread."

The raw Potatoe alſo, ſkinned and grated down, and mixed with flour in the above proportion, makes very good bread.

The Board takes the liberty of deſiring the Clergy, in their ſeveral pariſhes, to have the goodneſs to communicate the above to their neighbours: and at the ſame time to encourage, as much as they can, the farmers and cottagers to plant Potatoes this ſpring, in order that the kingdom may experience no ſcarcity, if the next harveſt ſhould prove either very late, or not ſufficiently productive in bread corn.

The Board would have taken a more direct and reſpectful mode of requeſting the aſſiſtance both of the Clergy and Laity in promoting theſe objects, had they not conceived this to be the moſt expeditious and extenſive.

The Board will be happy to give any additional information, to thoſe who may be inclined to enter with zeal and energy into the meaſures above propoſed. Any letters upon the ſubject, may be addreſſed to Sir John Sinclair, Bart. M. P. London, or to any other member of the Board.

A more enlarged paper, pointing out the additional experiments neceſſary for bringing the culture of Potatoes to perfection, is preparing, and will ſoon be publiſhed. In the interim, the Board thought it adviſable to print and circulate the preceding Hints as

early as poſſible, that the attention of the public might be drawn to ſo important an object; and that thoſe who might be induced, from the recommendation of the Board of Agriculture, to attend to the culture of this valuable root, might have it in their power, to take, without delay, the neceſſary ſteps for that purpoſe; *more eſpecially that of ſecuring, without loſs of time, a ſufficient quantity of the beſt ſorts for planting.*

Signed, by order of the Board,

JOHN SINCLAIR, Preſident.

Whitehall, 20th Feb. 1795.

N. B. Meſſrs. Winmill and Townſend, No. 10, Great Paternoſter-Row, Spittalfields, Meſſrs. Craike and Co. No. 183. Tooley-ſtreet, Mr. George Stadman, No. 36. Lamb-ſtreet, Spittalfields, and Mr. John Watkinſon, No. 184. High-Holborn, London, hope that it will be in their power to furniſh a conſiderable quantity of the early Champion, fit for planting, as ſoon as the ſeaſon will permit.